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CURRICULUM DECISIONS--FURTHER EXPLORATION OF BASES.

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A FIRST STEP IN DEVELOPING CURRICULUM PLANS IS TO CONSIDER THE BASES OF THE CURRICULUM DECISIONS IN TERMS OF THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR OBJECTIVES, LEARNING EXPERIENCES, TEACHING AIDS, AND EVALUATION. THESE BASES INCLUDE BELIEFS ABOUT HOME ECONOMICS AND EDUCATION, SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS, LEGISLATION AFFECTING EDUCATION AND FAMILIES, NEEDS OF STUDENTS, THE LOCAL SITUATION, SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT, AND DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION. SEVERAL CONSTANTS WHICH REMAIN BASIC EVEN IN A CHANGING SOCIETY SERVE AS GUIDELINES--(1) THE BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE, (2) THE MATERIAL ASPECTS OF FAMILY LIFE, SUCH AS FOOD, SHELTER, AND CLOTHING, (3) THE BASIC HUMAN NEEDS, SUCH AS SECURITY, AFFECTION, RECOGNITION, AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION, (4) THE HOME AS THE CENTER OF MATERIAL, CULTURAL, AND SPIRITUAL GOODS, AND (5) LIVING TOGETHER IN HUMAN DIGNITY AND DECENCY. SOCIETAL CHANGES ALSO AFFECT CURRICULUM DECISIONS--THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY, CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN, CHANGING STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR, LENGTHENING LIFE SPAN, DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MASS MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION AND THE IMAGE OF THE FAMILY WHICH IS PORTRAYED, AND INCREASINGLY SKILLFUL USE OF PROPAGANDA. THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS ARE FOR INCREASED EMPHASIS IN THE AREAS OF MANAGEMENT, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HOMEMAKING ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM. THE MAJOR SKILL EMPHASIS BELONGS IN THE WAGE EARNING ASPECT. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "ILLINOIS TEACHER OF HOME ECONOMICS," VOLUME 9, NUMBER 6, 1965-66. (MS)

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ILLINOIS TEACHER
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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

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CURRICULUM DECISIONS: FURTHER EXPLORATION OF BASES

A first step in developing curriculum plans is to consider the bases on which curriculum decisions in home economics rest in terms of their implications for objectives, learning experiences, teaching aids, and evaluation. These bases include:

- Beliefs about home economics, education, and life in general
- Socio-economic conditions, the impact of these on families, roles of men and women, and the employment situation in home economics-related occupations
- Legislation affecting education, families, and employment which might be considered an aspect of the foregoing consideration but has been of special significance in respect to recent developments in the field.
- Needs of students--general characteristics of students at different levels, individual differences, and developmental tasks
- Local situation--conditions and needs, personnel, facilities
- The content and organization of the subject field
- Developments in education--knowledge about teaching and learning, issues in education in general and in the subject fields.

In this article, some special consideration will be given the first two bases. Promise in terms of the first may be seen in a proposal for research in the philosophical bases for vocational education that has recently been brought to the attention of the Board of Directors of the American Vocational Association. The project should contribute both toward the development of the general area of vocational and technical education and toward its various areas of specialization, including home economics.

But that is in the future. As the teacher plans for the year ahead, she is guided by certain beliefs and values. How she views man, the family, the nature of work and leisure, the source of authority in education, the purposes of education, and the role of the school--all of these considerations serve as bases for her planning. And the clearer she is about her own beliefs the more considered are her judgments about objectives, content, learning experiences, teaching aids, evaluation.

To delve a bit more deeply in this area of beliefs and values, the writer would like to suggest what seems to her to be some of the

constants that one might keep in mind in developing curriculum plans. Even in this rapidly changing world, there are certain beliefs, goals and needs, certain aspects of family life that would appear basic and relatively unchanging.[1]

First, there is our belief in the importance of family life. Such a belief is basic to all that we teach in the areas of homemaking and family living. The family has long been recognized as a basic unit of society. It is the primary preserver of the human values which gives meaning and dignity to life.

We believe in the importance of homes and of family life. We believe that the family is of prime importance in the molding of personality. We believe that the family, which helps develop personal security based on affection and "belongingness," makes a most important contribution to society, even to world peace if you will, for only as one is himself secure can he grant tolerance, understanding, and security to others.

Further, we believe that the family is a dynamic unit with the potential for growth, development, and change. Our homemaking and family living programs are based on this conviction: that family life may be improved through education.

There are certain material aspects of family life, such as clothing, food, and shelter, which have always been with us. At least in the foreseeable future, we may expect to find these constants in some form or other. Our concern for the family must include a concern for what its members eat and wear and for what shelters them from the elements and provides an outlet for their desires to create and express themselves. There have been many changes in the material aspects of family life--even in our own generation. We must take these changes into account as we continue to give attention to nutrition and the preparation of food, the selection and care of clothing, and the selection and furnishing of a home.

The need of people for these material aspects of life is a basis for the development of the wage-earning aspect of the home economics program. We are, for the most part, concerned with the service occupations--those which meet human needs for material well-being. This is not to say that, in preparing students for occupational competency, we are unconcerned with other than the material, but in very large measure, it is skills with material goods to meet material needs that concern us.

Perhaps we could consider as constants the basic human needs--the needs for security, affection, recognition, dependence and independence, new experience, and a satisfying philosophy of life. These needs may be expressed and met in a variety of ways, but they are always there in each human being. As educators, and especially as home economics

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[1]Adapted from "Constants Affecting the Home Economics Program," by Elizabeth J. Simpson, American Vocational Journal (November 1960), p. 14.

educators, we must be concerned with the basic human needs, and how they may be met in the most satisfying and wholesome ways.

Man's need for creative expression might be considered one of the basic human needs. It seemed to me that we might give it special attention as one of the constants affecting the home economics program. Is there a feminine need to create a home and make it a place of beauty and order? I am inclined to think that there are few, if indeed any, women who lack this need, this desire to share in making a home--although, certainly there are many different standards of what is desirable in the home.

The need for creative expression is also, obviously, a factor to take into account in our employment education programs.

Another constant is the character of the home as a collector and synthesizer of material, cultural, and spiritual goods. The home, in a sense collects from our education institutions, from religious institutions, from the economic realm, from our political system, and from our social class system, which, in America according to some of our friends in the Social Sciences, has many of the characteristics of a social institution. Within families, what is collected is interpreted, according to the experiences, needs, interests, and values held by family members. Processes of sorting, accepting, discarding, and synthesizing take place. Ideas brought into the family setting are given meaning in terms of what the family thinks and does, in terms of what its members desire, and in terms of what they plan for the future.

Now, not only is the family so influenced; the family, in turn, exerts an influence! So, one might say that there is a two-way communication between the family and all other social institutions. The family influences and is influenced by.

The interrelationship between homes and families and the other units of our society is an area needing a great deal more study than we have yet given. However, we are making some significant efforts in this direction.

When the home is viewed in these terms, the relationship of the home to the work situation takes on a particular complexion. As does the dual role of homemaker-wage earner assumed by many women.

To live together in human dignity and decency is a goal with which the whole world is much concerned these days. In our culture, the values that are basic to the achievement of this goal constitute important constants which we in the educational fields must always keep in mind as we plan and develop our programs. Among these values are recognition of and respect for the unique worth of each individual, respect for individual rights and freedoms, and acceptance of concomitant responsibilities and democratic processes as ends as well as means to ends.

Keeping the constant factors in mind, let us turn to some of the changes in society and family life that serve as bases for our curriculum

decisions in home economics. It will be impossible to discuss here all of the changes that one might take into account. An attempt will be made to point up some that are of particular importance.

The responsibility of home economics with respect to the accelerated efforts to abolish poverty is a major area of concern. In an article in Adult Leadership for April, 1966, Robert J. Blakely discusses the war on poverty and adult education. He suggested a perspective for trying to understand why the American people, rather suddenly, "declared war on poverty." His major points were: (1) It is right that the American people now undertake to abolish poverty; it would be wrong for us not to do so, (2) The danger of not undertaking to abolish poverty can no longer be ignored. He declared, "Not in the city nor in the nation nor in the world is any human being free to deny that he shares a common nature with his fellow human beings. He is free only to choose between ways of acknowledgement: whether in mutual fear and destructiveness or in mutual hope and cooperation."[1] (3) The American people need, and will need, to use all their resources to the utmost, and poverty is a waster of human and other resources. Under this point, Mr. Blakely discussed the myth of abundance. He says that abundance is a myth because human needs and wants are illimitable. One paragraph seems especially significant for home economics education:

> Abundance is a myth. The main reason automation has not resulted, and may not result, in mass unemployment in the American society seems to be that the long-range shift in employment from goods to services is continuing. There is no limit to the number of services human beings are capable of consuming; there is no limit either to the number of services that only human beings can provide or to the amount of time needed to provide them.[2]

Our responsibilities in relation to the war on poverty seem fairly obvious. We have had conferences, reports, and articles on this subject in some abundance. The writer's own observations lead her to the conclusion that there are two major problems that have prevented educators from being more effective in this area. One is the lack of clarity with respect to objectives and methodologies and second, the lack of sufficient understanding of those served by the programs. In relation to the latter, a reference that seems particularly helpful is Jack Weller's Yesterday's People.[3] It is readable, fascinating fare about life in contemporary Appalachia. But, his point of view and many of his generalizations would seem to have some application to work with most of those in poverty circumstances.

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[1]Blakely, Robert J., "The Thistle," Adult Leadership, Vol. 14, No. 10, April, 1966, pp. 322-324.

[2]Ibid., p. 323.

[3]Weller, Jack, Yesterday's People, University of Kentucky Press, 1965, 163 pp.

The changing roles of women have important implications for home economics. The fact that many women carry the dual role of homemaker and wage-earner has implications for all three aspects of the home economics program: the homemaking and family life, the employment, and the preprofessional. Let's look at some of the facts: (1) In 1964, 26 million American women were in the labor force. This is 36 percent of all women 14 years and over and that is 34.7 percent of all workers. (2) Women who reached adulthood about the turn of the century participated in paid employment on the average for 11 years during their lives; today's school girls are likely to spend 25 years or more at a job outside the home over their lifetime. (3) About two out of every five mothers whose children are of school age are now in the labor force. (4) The most striking increase in employment has been among married and older women.

These facts suggest need for preparing women for the dual role with preparation for employment and for meeting her homemaking challenges. An emphasis on management and relationships, including child care and guidance would appear to be imperatives.

With changes in roles and role expectations, many women are experiencing problems of personal identity. Perhaps, concomitantly, men have some similar problems. Home economics has a responsibility here--especially as regards the roles of women. A major emphasis in two textbooks currently being prepared for high school home economics classes will be the roles of girls and women, the influences of these roles, cultural and subcultural variations, and related value considerations. A junior high school teacher of the writer's acquaintance has for two years taught a five-week unit on changing roles of women to her ninth-grade students. Current magazine articles on roles of women and interviews with mature women who might provide suitable models for the girls have been utilized in working toward the major objective of increased understanding by the girl of her present and future roles.

We read a great deal about changing standards of sexual morality. The extent to which they have or have not changed may be debatable. Certainly, young people face a great deal of confusion in this area. What is the role of the home economics teacher with respect to this situation? After considerable soul-searching and reading on the matter, the writer would like to suggest the following:

- First, the avoidance of preaching in terms of social conventions and moral precepts

- Second, the avoidance of simply presenting cold, social statistics with no guidance

- Rather, dealing with the matter in terms of the value bases for behavior: religion, health, status, conformity, nonconformity, etc., moving to responsibility as an ultimate value basis for moral action in the area of sexual relationships.

The lengthening life span and the high proportion of older people suggest need for helping students develop increased understanding and

acceptance of the aging process, helping them to better understand aging members of the family and aging friends and neighbors, and their developmental tasks and needs, and helping them develop appreciation for the social and economic usefulness of aging members of the family. Older people may be used as resource persons so students may widen their acquaintance with members of this age group.

Developments in the mass media of communication have had a terrific impact on us as a nation. Doubtless there have been many effects on family life. We get our news early; we are more aware of the world than were our grandparents. We turn a knob and loosen a stream of visitors in our living room. For provocative reading concerning media, I should like to recommend Marshall McLuhan's "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man."

There is one aspect of this field that has particular interest for the home economist and that is the image of the family as portrayed in the mass media.[1]

First of all, there are many evidences that ours is youth culture. For example, the age of the heroes and heroines on TV is much less than that of the villains. Average age of a TV heroine is 29; the average of the female villain is 42. A similar difference is found with respect to males. Another evidence that ours is a youth culture might be found in the Li'l Abner comic strip. Through the years, Li'l Abner has become larger and larger in proportion to Mammy and Pappy Yokum.

In our culture, the mother is often seen as a conscience figure; in the mass media, she represents discipline, punishment, conscience, socialization--and society! Because of this, she is frequently portrayed as a source of trouble and disturbances. If the disturbances are to be eliminated, the mother must be eliminated. Think of the many movies and TV programs without a mother: My Three Sons, The Andy Griffith Show to name two.

Studies have been made of the family relationships in American comic strips. The power structure tends to be, from top to bottom, children, mother, and father, who is low man on the totem pole. Examples might be found in Maggie and Jiggs and Little Iodine. A similar situation may be observed in some of the children-dominated TV families.

Fathers, in these images, want to be left alone but cannot because of the wife's demands. Think of the many times Dagwood has to escape from Blondie and the lawnmower.

Unmarried males in the comic strips tend to be taller than their female partners. After marriage, they tend to shrink.

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[1]Most of the research findings given on the image of the family in the mass media have been reported by Professor George Gerbner in his numerous articles and in his graduate classes at the U. of Illinois. Professor Gerbner, formerly in the School of Journalism, University of Illinois, is presently Dean of the College of Journalism, University of Pennsylvania.

The hero in the TV program or movie is often depicted as one who does not reciporcate love--for example, our cowboy and detective heroes like Matt Dillon and Secret Agent. They apparently developed by spontaneous generation; no family of origin is ever mentioned. For these heroes, love, while a universally recognized goal, is a danger because it leads to marriage--a situation in which men lose their strength. This hero is lonely and isolated; he has strength, but little tenderness. If there is a family, it usually consists of a child or an in-law. The family is a "made" family, not the one the hero was born into. Or there may be a social family like Matt and Festus. I think by no stretch of the imagination may Miss Kitty be considered a mother-figure.

In one study of the movies, it was found that, if a heroine was the main character, fathers appeared twice as often as if a hero was the main character. Conflict between a young man and an older man is a rather familiar movie theme.

American movies reflect tendencies to put the parental family in the background as "finished business."

The family image in the romance, confession magazines is a matter for some concern. There are about 40 titles among these magazines, and the circulation is 16,000,000. They have a working-class readership. The small towns and the South and Midwest provide proportionately more readers than other parts of the country.

The confession reader is not looking for escape--but for verification that life is troubled. The formula is a 'simple, trustful human faced with the hostilities of the world in a family context." The heroines are usually young, 58 percent in their early twenties. Villainess roles are filled by older women--mothers, step-mothers, mothers-in-law. There is a great deal of hard-boiled realism in the stories.

Family counseling is a kind of goal that women seem to have in mind when they read confession magazines. They hope to find answers in the actions of the story characters.

The stories are characterized by references to strong sex urges. Sex becomes overpowering and a source of fear.

This is part of the image of family life to which many of our students are exposed in our time. A recent issue of the Illinois Teacher carried a report on the teen-age heroine on TV. Analyzed were the three daughters in Petticoat Junction, Doris in the Hank show, Patty Duke, and Gidget.

May I suggest that you make your own study of the image of family life to which your students are being exposed. You may be pleasantly surprised in some instances. But, you will also be appalled. You will soon realize that, considering some of the pictures of family life to which they are exposed, teen-agers need a good image of family life to help them develop wholesome ideals of it. You will also realize the pressing need for helping our students become more discriminating in

respect to choices of what they read, hear, and see. And, for assuming responsibility for letting producers know what you like and approve.

The increasingly skillful use of propaganda is a social change with implications for curriculum improvement. We might find many examples of this. Perhaps the kind of propaganda of which we in home economics are most aware is seen in the advertisements that appear in magazines and on television. "Knows every scene-stealing way to make you the center of the stage" is the seductive whisper of a foundation garment ad. "Why wait for tonight? Aren't you a woman all day?" queries a perfume ad. "Are you the kind of woman who flies her own plane, wears a feather boa to a party?" Believe it or not, if you are, you are also the woman who uses Blank 'n' Blank's spaghetti sauce! A study of the emotional appeals used in the ads is an eye-opener for high school pupils and for adults.

The increasing impact of federal legislation on the family, on the work situation, and on education must be taken into account as we plan the content of our home economics programs.

Other social conditions to be considered in curriculum planning include:

- The explosive population growth
- Emergence of new nations and groups
- The presence of a distinct teen culture
- Increased leisure for those in some occupational categories
- Increasing school population
- Expanding knowledge in all areas
- Technological advances
- Space explorations
- Shrinking world
- Necessity for continuing education as a way of life
- Increase in buying and consumption on the part of teen-agers
- Continuing tensions among nations

Family considerations other than those mentioned include:

- Shift in relative importance of family functions
- Interchanging roles of family members
- Variety in family patterns

- Early marriages
- Increased importance of the family as consuming rather than producing unit
- Employed mothers
- Commuting workers
- Mobility of individuals and families
- Shifts in jobs

These and other social and family conditions serve as important bases for curriculum decisions in home economics. And, no matter how you look at the picture, the implications for program emphases are clear: Increased emphasis in the areas of management, human development, and relationships in the homemaking aspect of the program. The major skill emphasis belongs in the wage-earning aspect.